



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin, Jr
Assistant Chief

June 11, 2015

Via electronic submission

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Notice of Ex Parte Presentation
WC Docket No.11-42, Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On behalf of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ("Choctaw"), I am writing you to express my deep concern about changes reportedly under consideration to the Federal Communications Commission's ("Commission") Lifeline Program. It has come to our attention that the Commission is reviewing whether to narrow its definition of "Tribal Lands" in order to reduce Lifeline Program costs. We object to any change in the definition of "Tribal Lands" that would exclude any former reservation lands in Oklahoma on which our Choctaw Tribal citizens reside.

We recognize and applaud the commitment of the Commission, through the Lifeline program, to overcoming barriers that preclude low-income subscribers from accessing telecommunication services. That program has since 1985 sought to raise the exceedingly low percentage of telecommunications service subscribers on Tribal Lands. Under current law, residents of Tribal Lands who are eligible for the Lifeline Program receive a \$25.00 monthly subsidy in addition to the standard \$9.25 monthly subsidy. The Lifeline Program defines Tribal Lands as "any federally recognized Indian tribe's reservation, pueblo, or colony, including former reservations in Oklahoma; Alaska Native regions established pursuant to the Alaska Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688); Indian allotments... ."

The additional Tribal Lands subsidy support has ensured greater tribal member access to telecommunication services and allowed residents of Tribal Lands to meet the higher costs of obtaining telecommunications services in much of Indian Country.

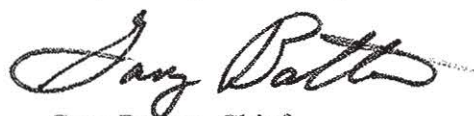
For our Choctaw citizens, the Lifeline program has proven to be of great value. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is comprised of **223,279 enrolled members of whom 84,670** reside throughout Oklahoma, the entirety of which was originally set aside as Indian Territory. By

definition, all of Oklahoma is classified as “former reservation”. Our Choctaw citizens rely on the Tribal Lands Lifeline Program subsidy. Narrowing the definition of Tribal Lands would eliminate this vital subsidy for a substantial portion of our Tribal citizens living throughout Oklahoma, resulting in a reduction or total loss of telecommunications services for those of our Tribal citizens who are struggling the hardest with a weak economy and difficult job market.

In conclusion, I wish to stress the importance of retaining the current definition of Tribal Lands to meet the needs of Choctaw Nation citizens and to maintain the Lifeline Program as originally intended.

This *ex parte* notification is being filed electronically with your office pursuant to Section 1.1206 of the Commission’s Rules.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Batton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gary Batton, Chief
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA